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From Shibboleths to Shared Terminology? The Divisive Place Names of Northern Ireland

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Abstract:

In Northern Ireland, terminology has become a war zone due to the region's longstanding ethno-political conflict. Unfortunately, with the exception of Hawes-Bilger's work (2007), there is little current research exploring this phenomenon. This paper aims to fill this current gap in knowledge by conducting a quantitative analysis on the use of contentious place names in Northern Ireland. The terms in this corpus linguistic study will be limited to 'Londonderry', 'Northern Ireland,' and the 'Republic of Ireland' and their variants. Ultimately, the goal of this paper is to determine if the relative peace throughout the last fifteen years has led to less use of politically charged toponyms among the main actors in the conflict: the Republicans and Unionists within Northern Ireland itself.

Keywords: conflict, language ideology, Northern Ireland, place names, Shibboleths

1. *Introduction*

In Northern Ireland, terminology has become a “minefield” (Mitchell 1999). The region has experienced longstanding ethno-political conflict and, in day-to-day interactions, the words that one uses can be revealing. Such lexical conflict is unsurprising for, “in cases where socio-cultural tensions are paramount, toponymic struggles may surface in a variety of everyday forms” including “the spontaneous use of alternative names and pronunciations” (Berg, Vuolteenaho 2009, 11). One such ‘toponymic struggle’ occurs in discussing Northern Ireland’s second largest city, Londonderry, known colloquially as ‘The Maiden City’ and ‘Stroke City’. In certain cases, use of the city’s official name can create a tense atmosphere as what is conveyed to the audience is often ‘I am a Unionist or Loyalist (and most likely a Protestant)

who supports and will defend Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom'. For this reason, to those of a differing sociopolitical background – Catholic, Nationalist or Republican – the term 'Londonderry' can be construed as offensive and even combative. Similarly, use of the term 'Derry', generally favored by Catholics, Nationalists and Republicans, can result in the same tensions. In Northern Ireland, place names are not simply accepted as neutral "facts" but as "power-charged semiotic dynamos for making meaning about places" (Berg, Vuolteenaho 2009, 7).

In accordance with the work of Cordula Hawes-Bilger (2007), this paper will view such terminological differences as linguistic aspects of the conflict and will support the idea that the language in Northern Ireland has become a war zone unto itself. Furthermore, this paper will build on Hawes-Bilger's work in two significant ways. First, it will connect Hawes-Bilger's work to that of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) regarding the use of metaphor in everyday life and assert that not only is language a war zone in Northern Ireland, as Hawes-Bilger claims, but that words are also conceptualized as weapons. Second, it will provide an empirical study in the use of "rival systems of naming" in Northern Ireland through a corpus linguistic study, focusing on the terms 'Londonderry', 'Northern Ireland' and the 'Republic of Ireland' and their variations (Baker 2005, 123).

In particular, this paper will look at ways in which the use of geographical terminology has changed over time across the ethno-political divide. The study will compare the language that has been, and is being, employed by political communities in Northern Ireland, primarily in news reports, but also in speeches and other publications. Ultimately, the goal is to determine whether the relative peace over the last fifteen years has lessened the use of politically charged place names among the main parties in the Northern Ireland conflict, namely the Republicans and Unionists. For if language can act as a social mirror, with "language structure and language use at any given time, and language change over time, reflect[ing] the social conditions within a society" (Chaika 1989, 2) then the more peaceful conditions created by, or reflected in, the signing of the Belfast Agreement should appear in language use.

1.1 *The Northern Ireland Conflict in Context*

The conflict in Northern Ireland can be viewed through many lenses – colonial, ethnic, religious and political. Evidence of conflict can be traced back as far as the twelfth century, when the English first began to seize land in Ireland. Constant revolts have, since then, challenged British rule in Ireland (Bartlett, Jeffrey 1996, 68).

Historically, the two overarching groups in conflict were the colonized, the indigenous Irish Catholics, and the colonizers, the Protestant English and Scottish settlers. The colonization of Ulster in 1606 resulted in a Protestant/Unionist majority in the area. In 1920, the Government of Ireland Act was

passed, partitioning the island to allow the six counties constituting the area known today as Northern Ireland to remain completely under British rule. The remaining twenty-six counties in the south of Ireland were to make up the Free State (later the Republic of Ireland). Today, the colonized and the colonizers generally fall into a Nationalist and Unionist political ideology, respectively. While Nationalists aim to form a united Ireland, Unionists fight to remain a part of the United Kingdom.

In the decades after partitioning, the Protestant majority upheld discriminatory laws and practices that had been established through anti-Catholic legislation passed in the nineteenth century, leading to widespread discontent. Discriminatory practices included limiting access to housing and employment, culminating in the thirty years known as *The Troubles*. This saw the establishment of the Catholic Civil Rights Movement in 1967 as well as intense violence perpetrated by paramilitary groups, both loyalist (extreme Unionists) and Republican (extreme Nationalists), as well as the British Army (Mullholland 2002, 48-66). *The Troubles* officially came to an end on April 10, 1998, after the signing of the Belfast, or Good Friday, Agreement (BFA or GFA).

2. Methodology

2.1 Corpus

In order to determine if there has been any significant change in the frequency of use of ideologically and politically charged place names in Northern Ireland since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (1998), I first created a corpus spanning the years 1972-2014. This corpus consists of over 14 million words, obtained from various English-language publications from Nationalist/Republican and Unionist/Loyalist perspectives in Northern Ireland, as well as the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, an explicitly non-sectarian political organization. Details on these publications can be found in Table 1:

Political Affiliation/ Total Word Count	Source	Total Words
Republican Sources 10,371,908	Republican News Archives (1997-2003)	6,936,052
	An Phoblact (2003-2013)	1,902,044
	Sinn Fein (1995-2003)	1,263,423
	Various from CAIN (1993-2013)	270,389
Non-sectarian Sources 2,061,856	Alliance Party (1995-2013)	2,061,856

Unionist Sources 1,737,463	The Revivalist (1972-1986) edited by Dr. Ian Paisley	1,153,223
	Democratic Unionist Party Archives (2012-2013)	211,477
	David Trimble Speech Archives (1998-2006)	36,605
	Various from CAIN (1992-2013)	336,158

Table 1: Sectarian and non-sectarian sources used in this study

While the inclusion of periodicals such as *The Revivalist*, speech transcripts and various reports introduces some diversity across registers, the predominant register represented within this corpus is news publications. Though it is important to “represent the different registers of the language” (Biber, Conrad, Randi 1998, 248), the specific intention of this study was to observe the language used within sectarian, or explicitly non-sectarian, news sources. This corpus is not intended to give an insight into language *in general*, but rather the language of political speeches, publications and news sources. This decision was based on two assumptions: one, that the language in these sources would reflect the language used by the source’s general readership and, two, that the language used by these sources would influence its audience (see Fowler 1991, 46-49).

2.2 Data Collection

In order to collect the necessary data, I implemented a Python script to find instances of the following toponyms¹:

Republic of Ireland	Derry	Northern Ireland
‘Republic of Ireland’	‘Derry’	‘Northern Ireland’
‘26 Counties’	‘Londonderry’	‘6 Counties’
‘South (of Ireland)’	‘Derry/Londonderry’	‘North (of Ireland)’
‘Free State’	‘Maiden City’	‘The Province’
‘Eire’	‘Stroke City’	‘Ulster’
‘Irish Republic’		

The number of tokens for each of these terms in the corpus was then calculated for the period before the signing of the Belfast Agreement (1972-

2002) and after (2003-2014), in order to determine if the use of divisive place names had changed with the changing sociopolitical conditions. In order to account for the fact that the signing of the Good Friday Agreement would not, in and of itself, create an immediately peaceful atmosphere however, I have included publications from the years 1998 to 2002 in the 'pre-Good Friday Agreement' category.

2.3 *Analysis*

In collecting the data, there were two aims. The first aim was to determine if the current literature concerning place names in Northern Ireland could be corroborated quantitatively. To do this, data for the following pairings were compared: first, Republican and Unionist sources' use of toponyms pre-Good Friday Agreement (pre-GFA) and second, Republican and Unionist sources' use of toponyms post-Good Friday Agreement (post-GFA). The second aim was to look at how the use of toponyms has changed over time in each political party. To do this, the Republican sources' use of terms pre-GFA and post-GFA as well as Unionist use of terms pre-GFA and post-GFA were compared. For each of these comparisons, the relative frequency of each term in question was calculated with respect to each of the competing terms for 'Republic of Ireland', 'Londonderry', and 'Northern Ireland' using the following equation:

$$\text{Relative frequency} = f / n$$

Here, 'f' is equal to the number of times a specific term is used in the corpus and 'n' is equal to the total number of times any of the observed terms are used in the corpus.

3. *Literature Review*

3.1 *Language as a War Zone? Words as Weapons?*

As Conor O'Clery notes, "a unique feature of Irish politic [is that] words have often come to be charged with as much significance as the events which inspired them" (1987, 7). Moreover, language in Northern Ireland is often associated with concepts of war and violence as Hawes-Bilger observes (2007, 9). Language is described as "loaded" or "barbed" (2007, 9), headlines frequently tell of a "war of words" taking place when reporting public disagreements and phrases discussing "the violence of the spoken word", "the words of war and conflict", and "the language of war" are not uncommon (2007, 9).

Lakoff and Johnson argue that the conceptual system structuring "what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people", is largely metaphorical (1980, 3). In order to better understand our conceptual system,

they suggest looking at language, particularly metaphors, as “communication [...] based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting” (1980, 3). Metaphors, specifically those classified by Lakoff and Johnson as “dead” – so fundamental to our language that we no longer perceive them as metaphors – give insight into the concepts we live by, which structure our everyday lives.

One conceptual metaphor elucidated in language in Northern Ireland is WORDS ARE WEAPONS. This connection should not be so foreign to most native English speakers: colloquial phrases equating language and weaponry are found in a description such as ‘sharp-tongued’ or a phrase such as ‘the pen is mightier than the sword’. Though the former deals with spoken language and the latter deals with written language, it is language in general that is equated with a weapon. In Northern Ireland, this conceptual metaphor can be demonstrated by Lakoff and Johnson’s framework in the following examples (see Lakoff, Johnson 198, 4).

She spat out the words like *machine-gun bullets*.

[Ian] Paisley has *fired verbal bullets*.

Harmony is unheard amid *verbal crossfire*.

It’s fair to say that unionists are more versed in *verbal combat* than nationalists.

Terminology in Northern Ireland is a *minefield*.

[w]e need to have a *decommissioning of words*.

[...] as mediators we find ourselves constantly having to steer paths through potentially *explosive verbal mine-fields*. (Hawes-Bilger 2007, 9-10)

Though these examples are not universally literal as those in Lakoff and Johnson’s work (1980, 4), the prevalence of connections between language and notions of war and violence, as noted by Hawes-Bilger, is striking. More specifically, despite the fundamental differences between units of language and instruments of war, words are understood and experienced in terms of weaponry in Northern Ireland. As Lakoff and Johnson remind us, “*the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*” (1980, 5). For this reason, we can hypothesize that, in Northern Ireland, WORDS ARE WEAPONS is a metaphorical concept to live by and that one’s choice of words becomes critical: using the wrong word could be seen as a form of attack.

4. *The Lexical Arsenal*

The toponyms studied in this paper are therefore highly scrutinized, not only due to the metaphorical concept of WORDS ARE WEAPONS,

but due to their inherent, politically charged nature as place names (Berg, Vuolteenaho 2009, 7).

Contention between the “rival systems of naming” used to discuss a place in Northern Ireland has long been apparent (Baker 2005, 123). From speakers’ advanced apologies for the use of potentially offensive terminology (as quoted in Hawes-Bilger 2007, 33), footnotes in publications describing the use of different terms by Catholics/Nationalists/Republicans and Protestants/Unionists/Loyalists and anecdotal evidence provided by those who have lived in the region, it is clear that there is a pervasive understanding that toponyms can “be seen as a means of communicating [ideological] meaning about place” (Berg, Kearns 2007, 26). In this section, we will look more closely at which ideological meaning is communicated by each toponym, first based on literature, then, based on the results of the corpus linguistic study.

4.1 *Republic of Ireland*

4.1.2 *Literature*

Within Northern Ireland, various terms are used to discuss the political entity encompassing the other 26 counties on the island of Ireland. Since 1949, when all formal allegiance to the British crown was terminated, the official name for this region has been the ‘Republic of Ireland’. From 1937-1949, the political region had been known as ‘Eire’, the Irish word for ‘Ireland’ and, before then, the ‘Free State’, after the Government of Ireland Act (1920). Hawes-Bilger notes that while the term ‘Republic of Ireland’ is used by individuals across the ethno-political divide, Nationalists and Republicans in Northern Ireland often reject it, as it is not the all-Ireland Republic so desired. Instead, Republicans in the North generally refer to the south of the island as ‘the 26 Counties’, where the Republic of Ireland makes up 26 of the 32-county island of Ireland, or ‘the South (of Ireland)’, implying that the Republic of Ireland is in the southern part of the same country as Northern Ireland. Meanwhile, Unionists and Loyalists have advocated for the use of the term ‘Eire’, “to make [the Republic of Ireland] sound foreign” and ‘Irish Republic’, as this implies only the 26-county region and not the whole of Ireland as the term ‘Republic of Ireland’ does (75).

4.1.3 *This Study*

Based on the analyses within this study, the evidence robustly conveys the divisive nature of place names in Northern Ireland. With reference to the table of relative frequencies below, it is apparent that there are significant contrasts between the preferred terms of each political perspective in both the pre- and post-Good Friday Agreement period. The raw token count can also be found underneath the relative frequency.

	Irish Republic	26 Counties	South (of Ireland)	Republic of Ireland	Free State	Eire
Republican pre-GFA	1.7% 47	49.1% 1378	11.6% 324	1.2% 34	10.1% 283	26.3% 738
Unionist pre-GFA	27.2% 28	0.0% 0	18.4% 19	41.7% 43	1.9% 2	10.7% 11
Republican post-GFA	2.3% 21	57.6% 515	29.2% 261	0.7% 6	2.8% 25	7.4% 66
Unionist post-GFA	13.8% 15	0.0% 0	5.5% 6	77.1% 84	0.9% 1	2.8% 3

Table 2: Comparison of Sectarian Sources' Use of Variants for 'Republic of Ireland' Over Time

Throughout the Republican sources, statements featuring the terms '26 Counties' and 'South (of Ireland)' like those found below are commonplace:

THE British Government has rejected calls to bring the North's corporation tax rate into line with that of the *26 Counties* [...], Investment in the social economy in the *south of Ireland* by the Irish Government is around €40 million and in Scotland £30 million and has played a key role in their respective anti-poverty strategies. (McLaughlin 2007; McCann 2009; my emphasis)

In the years before the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the two terms most used in Republican sources were '26 Counties' and 'Eire', 49.1% and 26.3% of the time respectively. Post-GFA, usage of the word 'Eire' in these sources decreased to 7.4%, whilst the terms '26 Counties' and 'South (of Ireland)' were instead preferred, 57.6% and 29.2% of the time respectively.

Across both pre- and post-GFA Unionist sources however, the terms 'Republic of Ireland' and 'Irish Republic' are most popular. Statements like those found below, featuring both terms, are typical:

We have had in the past few weeks the uncovering of the rottenness of the state system of the *Irish Republic* ... its core is contained in the idea that the Government of the *Irish Republic*, a foreign State, will work together with the British Government [...]. And it is in the interests of the people of Great Britain, and in the interests of the people of the *Republic of Ireland* to encourage the development of healthier politics in Northern Ireland [...]. (Paisley 1994; Trimble 2001; my emphasis)

In the post-GFA period however, the use of the term 'Republic of Ireland' skyrocketed by 35.4% while use of the term 'Irish Republic' decreased by 13.4%.

Moreover, comparing the lexical preferences for Unionists and Republicans, the opposing top preferences for each group – namely '26 Counties' and 'Republic

of Ireland’ – show divergent patterns. While ‘26 Counties’ is easily the Republicans’ most favored term pre- and post-GFA, the Unionists’ had a 0.0% use. Instead, their preference is to opt for the term ‘Republic of Ireland’, the Republicans’ least favored term. In fact, while ‘Republic of Ireland’ was by far the most favored term by Unionists in the pre- and post-GFA eras, use of the term by Republican sources fell from 1.2% to an even lower 0.7% use. A similar pattern can be seen in the second most preferred terms across the pre- and post-GFA years for each group: for Republicans, this would be ‘Eire’ and ‘South (of Ireland)’ and for Unionists ‘Irish Republic’.

Furthermore, based on the data it is possible to hypothesize the groupings of the lexical items by political affiliation through quantitative analysis. For the Republic of Ireland, the terms can be grouped as follows:

Republican Terms

26 Counties
South (of Ireland)
Free State
Eire

Unionist Terms

Republic of Ireland
Irish Republic

While the groupings suggested within the corpus study are extremely close to those suggested by Hawes-Bilger, it is interesting to note that the term ‘Eire’, which she posits is advocated by Unionists and Loyalists in an attempt to ‘other’ the Republic of Ireland, is found to pattern with other Republican terms in the post-GFA era. That being said, Hawes-Bilger is not incorrect in her observations concerning the term ‘Eire’. Despite the fact that ‘Eire’ is the second most commonly used term employed by Republicans in the pre-GFA years, use of the term decreased greatly after the signing of the Agreement. Whereas ‘Eire’ had been used 26.3% of the time pre-GFA, its use dropped to 7.3% in the post-GFA period.

4.2 Derry or Londonderry?

4.2.1 Literature

Derry is the second largest city in Northern Ireland. The name of the region was originally, in Irish, *Daire Calgaigh*, meaning ‘oak grove of Calgach’. The name *Daire*, or *Doire*, was later anglicized as ‘Derry’. In 1613, King James I gave the Royal Seal to the Charter of Londonderry, after it had been provided considerable investment by London Guilds and merchants. The prefix ‘London-’ was then added to the name of the city. Whereas today, Unionists and Loyalists refer to the city as ‘Londonderry’, Nationalists and Republicans will tend to use the term ‘Derry’. The dispute over the name became especially contentious during the Troubles, as illustrated when radio presenter Gerry Anderson created the non-sectarian term ‘Stroke City’ (in reference to the forward-slash in ‘Derry/Londonderry’) to refer to the city.

4.2.2 *This Study*

There is still strong evidence to suggest that, like the lexical choice for ‘Republic of Ireland’, political affiliation and preferred toponym are associated with one another for ‘Derry’. In fact, it appears that the terms used for the city are the most overtly divisive across the pre- and post-GFA years. As Hawes-Bilger notes, Republicans tend to use ‘Derry’ while Unionists tend to use ‘Londonderry’; and, overall, no group seems to use inclusive terminology such as ‘Derry/Londonderry’, ‘Stroke City’ or ‘Maiden City’ (98). In fact, despite the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the Republican and Unionist sources continue to use the politically charged choices of ‘Derry’ or ‘Londonderry’ respectively, as seen in Table 3.

	Derry	Londonderry	Inclusive Terms
Republican pre-GFA	99.1% 1610	0.8% 13	0.1% 1
Unionist pre-GFA	10.5% 4	86.8% 33	2.6% 1
Republican post-GFA	98.9% 450	1.1% 5	0.0% 0
Unionist post-GFA	9.4% 3	81.3% 26	9.4% 3

Table 3: Comparison of Sectarian Sources’ Use of Variants for ‘Londonderry’ Over Time

In this sense, the results of this corpus analysis suggest that David Butler is right to assert that to choose between calling the city (or county, in his case) ‘Derry’ or ‘Londonderry’ is a “stark choice”. As he puts it, in using the term ‘Derry’, “the semiological cat is out of the bag, for you (if you are clued in to the meaningfulness of the codes) could fairly conclude that I am not a loyalist” (Butler 1995, 105). Considering the overwhelming preference for Republicans to use ‘Derry’ and Unionists to use ‘Londonderry’, it is not difficult to crack the “code” to which he alludes (105).

4.3 *Northern Ireland*

4.3.1 *Literature*

Many Nationalists and Republicans reject the term ‘Northern Ireland’, on the grounds that the creation of the state in 1920 was an illegal act. Thus, to use that name would be seen as legitimizing the division of the island of Ireland. Instead, they avoid using the term, they generally refer to ‘the North

(of Ireland)' and 'the (occupied) Six Counties'. Meanwhile, Loyalists and Unionists generally use the term 'Ulster' for the territory, as the six counties which form it are part of the ancient Irish province of Ulster. Though three of the counties which once belonged to this province are now in the Republic of Ireland, the name 'Ulster' is still used to dissociate Northern Ireland from its neighboring state.

4.3.2 *This Study*

In looking at Table 4, it is apparent that there are strong differences between the preferred terms of each political perspective in both the pre- and post-GFA period.

	North (of Ireland)	Six Counties	Northern Ireland	The Province	Ulster
Republican pre-GFA	22.3% 1036	53.5% 2488	13.1% 611	1.0% 45	10.1% 472
Unionist pre-GFA	1.1% 22	0.2% 4	51.0% 969	8.7% 165	39.0% 741
Republican post-GFA	37.1% 603	50.1% 813	7.7% 125	0.4% 7	4.7% 76
Unionist post-GFA	0.0% 0	0.1% 5	87.4% 3124	5.6% 199	6.9% 248

Table 4: Comparison of Sectarian Sources' Use of Variants for 'Northern Ireland' Over Time

The terms most preferred by Republican sources were 'Six Counties' and 'North (of Ireland)', respectively, across the pre- and post-GFA periods. Throughout Republican sources, statements featuring these terms are commonplace:

For over 30 years the British government has presided directly over the systematic ill treatment and torture of Irish people within the *north of Ireland* [...], Dublin foreign affairs minister Brian Cowen set up a committee last June to consider opening a passport office in the *Six Counties* [...]. (Friel 1998; Doherty 2000; my emphasis)

On the other hand, Unionists across the pre- and post-GFA periods tend to favor the official name 'Northern Ireland' and the term 'Ulster':

[Co Wicklow] is also one of the most religiously mixed areas outside *Ulster* [...]. This time last year my strategy of renegotiating a fair deal for *Ulster* was laughed at by our enemies [...]. So strong is the longing for an end to *Northern Ireland's* long agony that some are willing to take almost anything on trust [...]. (Trimble 1998; Paisley 2004; Trimble 1999; my emphasis)

Despite this, use of the term ‘Ulster’ plummets from 39.0% to 6.9% post-GFA. At the same time, use of the term ‘Northern Ireland’ increases from 51.0% to 87.4%.

Unionist sources clearly avoid use of the Republicans’ top two lexical preferences for ‘Northern Ireland’ and *vice versa*. While the Republican sources within this corpus study overwhelmingly chose to use the variants ‘6 Counties’ and ‘North (of Ireland)’ across the pre-and post-GFA years, accounting for over 75.0% of the relevant data in each time period, Unionists overwhelmingly avoided using these terms across the pre- and post-GFA years, as evidenced by the fact that the terms count for less than 2.0% of the relevant data in each time period. Similarly, Republican sources tended to avoid using ‘Northern Ireland’ and ‘Ulster’, using these terms 13.1% and 10.1% in the pre-GFA years and 7.7% and 4.7% in the post-GFA years.

Furthermore, based on the data gathered from the corpus study, it is possible to hypothesize the groupings of the lexical items by political affiliation through quantitative analysis. For Northern Ireland, the terms can be grouped as follows across the pre- and post-GFA years:

Republican Terms	Unionist Terms
6 Counties	Northern Ireland
North (of Ireland)	Ulster
	The Province

Based on both the literature and preliminary information gleaned from the corpus linguistic study there is support for the assumption that certain place names are highly contested in Northern Ireland. As Mona Baker acknowledges, the choices between such place names “are not interchangeable, and none of them is ‘neutral’” and these preliminary studies support her assertion that each term “clearly signals a specific narrative position” (2005, 125).

Now, to address the overarching aim of this study: whether the more politically and socially peaceful culture catalyzed by the signing of the Good Friday Agreement has resulted in the use of less divisive terms.

5. *Comparison of Post-GFA Use of Terms with ‘Non-Sectarian’ Party’s ‘Neutral’ Language*

In order to determine if the terminology used by Unionists and Republicans has become more neutral since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the use of terminology by sectarian sources will be compared to that of the Alliance Party. Given the Alliance Party’s explicitly non-sectarian aim, its terminology can easily be viewed as the benchmark by which to judge ‘neutral’ terminology.

In comparing the use of terms for the Republic of Ireland across the potential political affiliations, including the explicitly neutral Alliance Party, two trends become apparent, as seen in Table 5.

	Irish Republic	26 Counties	South (of Ireland)	Republic of Ireland	Free State	Eire
Unionist Post	13.8% 15	0.0% 0	5.5% 6	77.1% 84	0.9% 1	2.8% 3
Alliance Post	0.2% 4	0.0% 0	3.6% 6	86.5% 141	0.6% 1	0.6% 1
Republican post	2.3% 21	57.6% 515	29.2% 261	0.7% 6	2.7% 25	7.3% 66

Table 5: Comparison of Use Between Sectarian and Non-Sectarian Sources' Use of Variants for 'Republic of Ireland'

The first apparent trend is that both the Alliance Party and Unionist sources overwhelmingly prefer the term 'Republic of Ireland' to all other terms in post-GFA years. The second is that the lexical preference of the Alliance Party and the Unionist source is the least preferred term in Republican sources and *vice versa*. There is a strong similarity therefore between the terminology employed by the Alliance Party and that of Unionists and a strong division between the terminology of the Alliance and Unionist sources and that of Republicans.

The apparent similarity in toponymic preference is further strengthened by the data concerning lexical preferences for Northern Ireland, reproduced in Table 6.

	North (of Ireland)	6 Counties	Northern Ireland	The Province	Ulster
Unionist Post	0.0% 0	0.1% 5	87.4% 3124	5.6% 199	6.9% 248
Alliance Post	0.2% 12	0.0% 0	98.5% 5368	2.9% 16	1.0% 55
Republican Post	37.1% 63	50.1% 813	7.7% 125	0.4% 7	4.6% 76

Table 6: Comparison of Use Between Sectarian and Non-Sectarian Sources' Use of Variants for 'Northern Ireland'

Here, the lexical preferences for the Unionist sources and the Alliance Party overlap with an overwhelming preference towards the term 'Northern Ireland', while Republican sources diverge: the term is one of their least preferred. Once again, the lexical preferences of the Republican sources, 'Six Counties' and 'North (of Ireland)', are the least preferred terms of the Union-

ist and Alliance sources. From this data, it would appear that the preferred Unionist terminology is growing closer to that of the Alliance Party.

The only exception to this trend is found in the results of the toponyms for Derry, as seen in Table 7.

	Derry	Londonderry	Inclusive Terms
Unionist Post	9.4% 3	81.3% 26	9.4% 3
Alliance Post	56.3% 93	40.0% 66	3.6% 6
Republican Post	98.9% 450	1.1% 5	0.0% 0

Table 7: Comparison of Use Between Sectarian and Non-Sectarian Sources’ Use of Variants for ‘Londonderry’

In this case, there remains a disparity in preferred terminology between each of the political affiliations. While the Alliance Party overlaps more with the Republican sources due to its greater use of the term ‘Derry’, it is also clearly the most inclusive of the political groups within this corpus, despite use of veritably inclusive terminology such as ‘Derry/Londonderry’ remaining as low as 3.6%. Overall, there is a far less polarized distribution of the terms used, given the Alliance Party’s desire to appear, or be, inclusive, this is unsurprising.

6. Discussion

6.1 *If Language Reflects the Social Conditions within a Society, what Does This Language Tell Us About the Current Social Conditions in Northern Ireland?*

Two observations may be drawn from the results of this corpus linguistic analysis. First, there *has* been a quantitative change over time in the use of contentious toponyms between the pre- and post-GFA years. Second, this change is, in part, in the opposite direction to what one would expect if society had indeed become more peaceful. Where Unionists have more fully embraced the neutral, official titles of the regions described in this study, Republicans have remained averse to their use over time.

One could conclude that Unionists have become more peaceful, discarding more inflammatory terms and moved towards politically correct terms of ‘Northern Ireland’ and the ‘Republic of Ireland’. This analysis is appealing given that results for the Unionist sources bear semblance to those of the non-sectarian Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, as discussed. An alternative explanation

would question, however, whether Republicans are indeed moving away from the more neutral terminology while Unionists are embracing it in the years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. The terminology that is politically correct may not, in fact, be as neutral as the Alliance Party would like to believe.

More importantly, given the results of this study, it is more accurate to suggest that the politically correct, or official, terms that the Unionist and Alliance sources favor cannot be neutral. This is because the contentious terminology for place names in Northern Ireland can be seen as “rival systems of naming”, resulting from the presence of “rival communities and traditions” (Baker 2005, 123; MacIntyre 1998, 378). Within this structure of ‘rival systems of naming’, “to use a name is at once to make a claim about political and social legitimacy and to deny a rival claim” (Baker 2005, 123; MacIntyre 1998, 378). Moreover, according to MacIntyre, “names are used *as* identification *for* those who share the same beliefs, the same justifications of legitimate authority, and so on. The institutions of naming embody and express the shared standpoint of the community and characteristically its shared traditions of belief and enquiry” (MacIntyre 1998, 378). It may be better therefore to assume that the similarity between the overall lexical preferences of the Unionist and Alliance Party sources is not evidence of the Unionist sources moving towards neutrality, but of the Alliance Party accepting and reinforcing terminology that is, at worst, laden with Unionist ideology and embroiled in a type of zero-sum struggle or, at best, disfavored by roughly half of the community in the region, based solely on its historical ties to Unionist traditions.

If the continued avoidance of the terms ‘Republic of Ireland’ and ‘Northern Ireland’ by the Republican sources is due primarily to the terms’ associations with Unionism, one possible solution would be for political groups, specifically non-sectarian groups, to reinforce terms that are neutral, not in the sense that they are official, but in the sense that they are less stigmatized across the ethno-political divide. The obvious complication is that terms free of sectarian associations are difficult to identify. For example, while relatively unused within this corpus, the term ‘Derry/Londonderry’ is generally regarded as a neutral term because it is a conflated form of the exclusive variants ‘Derry’ and ‘Londonderry’ whereas the official term, ‘Londonderry’ is very obviously politically charged, as evident by the results of this study. Unfortunately, such connotations are not quite as easy to create for ‘Northern Ireland’ and the ‘Six Counties’ or ‘Republic of Ireland’ and the ‘26 Counties’.

On the other hand, as Pádar Whelan, editor of *An Phoblacht* and the *Republican News* notes, “language ‘is a central part of the political struggle... [o]ur [the republicans’] language reflects our political interpretation of the situation here and also is a way of expressing our analysis of the conflict” (Whelan in Hawes-Bilger 2007, 11). In this sense, it is possible that the continued resistance by Republicans to the terms ‘Northern Ireland’ and ‘Republic of Ireland’ is due to their refusal to give up their longstanding claims concerning ‘political

and social legitimacy' through naming as part of the 'rival systems of naming' paradigm. If that is the case, the results of this study suggest that while the violence has largely ended, the conflict continues. In fact, its persistence can be seen in the continued outbreaks of violence on both sides of the ethno-political divide: bomb attempts made by the Real IRA; Sinn Féin's continued calls for a border poll; and, flag protests and riots carried out by Unionists and Loyalists as recently as last year to which, incidentally, 45% of unionists polled felt sympathetic, believing that they should continue (BBC News: Timeline of Dissident Republican Activity; RTE News/Ireland: Sinn Féin Calls for Border Poll on Partition; BBC News: Q&A: Northern Ireland Flag Protests).

6.2 *Conclusions*

Ultimately, this study can only approximate the trends found in the language used in Northern Ireland, across the ethno-political divide. That being said, the results suggest that the contentious nature of place names has persisted throughout the years of relative peace after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Whether this continued manifestation of the Northern Ireland conflict by means of a system of rival place names is predominantly due to the desire to assert a political or social claim (or deny a rival's) because of the continued existence of ethno-political conflict or the result of the terms within this study having a longstanding association with particular political affiliations is unclear. Regardless, a first step to breaking down this persistent division is the reinforcement of inclusive terms where they already exist, as with the term 'Derry/Londonderry', or, the implementation of a collaborative effort to create inclusive terms where none yet exist. Or, in Gerry Adams' words, "dialogue is the means by which the old taboos, antagonisms and fears can be banished and replaced by new ideas, new language and new accommodations agreed" (Hawes-Bilger 2007, 34). While such action would be difficult and would not necessarily ensure success, the changes to the language, "which supplies the models and categories of thought" could help break down the 'us versus them' mentality that continues to plague Northern Ireland by "influenc[ing] non-linguistic behavior such as cognitive activity" (Adams in Hawes-Bilger 2007, 34).

6.3 *Suggestions for Further Research*

While this work has focused in particular on language used by politically affiliated sources within Northern Ireland, a continuation of this study concerning the language used within the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain in the years before and after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement would be illuminating given both nations' involvement in the conflict. Further study on the use of language and the Northern Ireland conflict would do well to focus on eliciting data by conducting interviews with individuals in Northern Ireland.

Notes

¹ Slight variations of these terms were also included in the keywords search as, in many cases, the terms are equivalent but happen to be written out differently. For example, Six Counties may also appear as 6 Counties. Therefore, in order to make sure all instances of the term Six Counties were counted, '6 Counties' was also included as a search term. Other search words included for this reason were 'Twenty Six Counties' and 'Londonderry/Derry'.

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